THEATRICAL News and STAGE Chat.

TAKING STOCK OF A SEASON THAT IS NOW HALF SPED

The first half of the theatrical season of 1906-7 is about over, and the time for the mid-season stock-taking has arrived. Frankly, it has not been, so far as Washington is concerned, a particularly brilliant beginning, though there have been some very bright spots in it. And rumors of great things doing in New York have drifted southward full of pleasant promise for Washington later in the season, or perchance next season.

Down here there have been a few distinctly tiresome plays, which really seemed to have no sufficient excuse for existence. Some of them, be it said, ceased to exist shortly after starting on their travels. We have had any number of "pleasant little plays," the sort that help to pass the time away, but leave no lasting impression. And we have had at least one unpleasant big play in "The Great Divide," which, after being unmercifully scored by all of the Washington papers, except The Times, and equally illtreated in Pittsburg, has become one of the pronounced hits of the New York season.

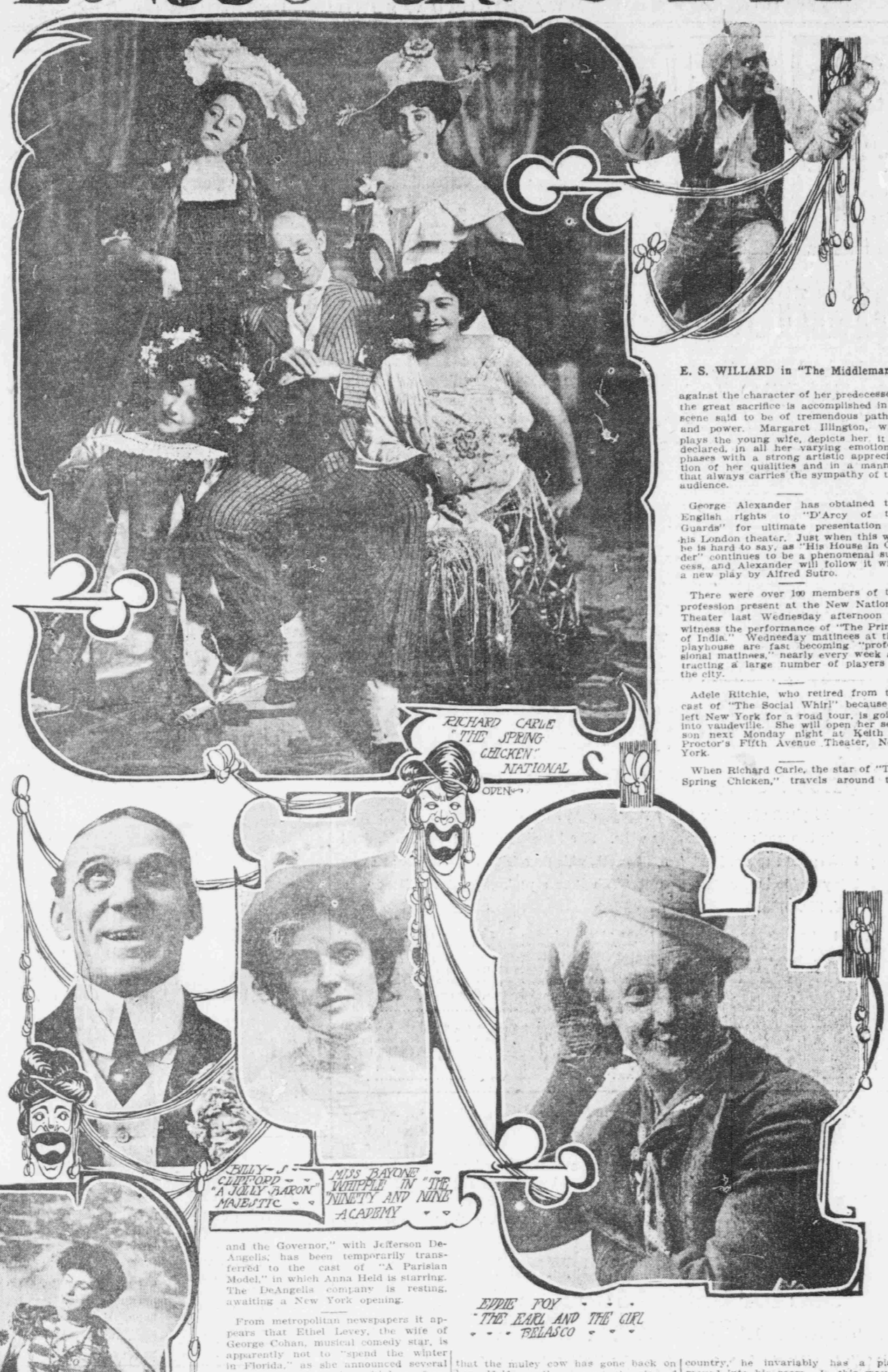
As to "The Great Divide's" being most artistically presented, there can be no question. As to the desirability of presenting it at all, there must be much. That it is strong, full of vitality, gripping in its interest, is beyond doubt. It is not a question of morality; it is a question of taste. "The Great Divide" is moral to a degree, but it is terribly embarrassing. There are subjects that lie at the very roots of life, fit subjects for serious discussion with our nearest and dearest, in moments of rare intimacy and self-revealing, that are scarcely fit subjects for the theater. Merely as an expression of personal opinion, of course, "The Great Divide" forced them upon the attention of its audience, and from my own personal point of view that sort of thing is quite unnecessary. Moreover, it must be admitted at once that "The Great Divide," which has succeeded so brilliantly in New York, is not by a good deal "The Great Divide" which, in spite of the tremendous discussion it called forth, played to empty seats here and in Pittsburg. Mr. Miller and Miss Anglin profited by their experience on the road, and cut and pared and pruned and rewrote and revised so that when they opened in New York, in place of the hard hunks of language which had been hurled at them, they received an ovation.

There have been some bright spots—some productions that were big without being unpleasant, that the mere having seen is to have permanently enriched the memory—and for these the spot light has shifted around from one theater to another. The National has given us two fine Shakespearean contributions, Viola Allen's "Cymbeline" production, and Annie Russell's "Midsummer Night's Dream," both of them delightful to see and pleasant to remember. The Belasco has given us a Sothern-Marlowe week with three beautiful productions to linger long in the memory, and establish new standards for future comparison. The Columbia has given us "Madame Butterfly," one of the most exquisitely beautiful productions, whether one regards it musically, dramatically, or merely pictorially, that has ever been put on the stage. Apart from these there have been any number of productions that were very well worth while, productions that were rather above the average, productions that would appeal even to those who do not regard the theater merely as an aid to digesting dinner or to escaping thought—the real music of "The Student King," "Mlle. Modiste," "The Free Lance," and just this last week "The Rose of the Alhambra;" the swing and action and rollicking liveliness of "The Vanderbilt Cup," the humor of Francis Wilson's "Mountain Climber" and Dallas Welford's "Mr. Hopkinson," and the spirit of youth and romance in Mary Mannering's "Glorious Betsy" and Harry Woodruff's "Brown of Harvard," and a delicate something which was none of these in Ethel Barrymore's "Alice Sit-by-the-Fire." On the whole there seems to have been more that was worth while in the last four months than one would be inclined to give them credit for.

The biggest week from the artistic point of view came about the middle of November, with the Sothern-Marlowe company at the Belasco, Ethel Barrymore at the National, Dallas Welford as "Mr. Hopkinson" (and that in its own line was the choicest thing that has ever been here, and was not half appreciated) at the Columbia, and Mrs. Langtry at Chase's. The biggest week from the box office standpoint was Thanksgiving week, with "Glorious Betsy" at the National, "The Belle of London Town" at the Belasco, and "The Old Homestead" at the Columbia, all doing a capacity business, though no one of them was by any means the best offering that its respective theater had made.

It is a pity that so large a proportion of the public does regard the theater "as a means of digesting dinner and escaping thought." But the fact remains that it does; and so long as it does "musical comedy," which is, most of it, pretty poor music and mighty thin comedy, too frequently a combination of horse play and vulgarity—"girls, glitter, and gags"—will pay better than serious drama, artistic comedy, or real music. "The Ham Tree" will draw larger houses than "Madam Butterfly." Theodore Kremer will address a larger audience than William Shakespeare.

M. McD.



RICHARD CARLE "THE SPRING CHICKEN" NATIONAL

BILLY S. CLIFFORD "A JOLLY BARON" MAJESTIC

MISS BAYONE WHIPPLE IN "THE NINETY AND NINE" ACADEMY

EDDIE FOY "THE EARL AND THE GIRL" BELASCO

HELEN HALE AND LUCY TONGE "THE MAN FROM NOW" AT THE COLUMBIA

E. S. WILLARD in "The Middleman."

Behind the Footlights.

Here is an announcement from the Belasco that should be of general interest:

"Owing to the unprecedented demand for seats for the engagement of David Warfield, in 'The Music Master,' at the Belasco Theater, the management, while desiring to give all patrons an equal opportunity to secure seats, finds that this intention cannot be carried out if mail or telephone orders are accepted. Therefore, no reservations of any nature will be made. The seat sale will open Thursday, January 10, at 9 a. m., at the box office. Respectfully,

"L. STODDARD TAYLOR,
"Manager."

Grace George, who comes to the National shortly with "Clothes" (lots of 'em, and beauties!), is preparing for some special performances of Ibsen's "The Lady from the Sea" and "The Wild Duck" and Sardou's "Divorcons" during her return engagement in New York this spring.

William Gillette, not wholly satisfied with his record as a dramatist for the "regular" theater, has been writing a one-act play for the vaudevilles, to be called "The Red Owl." This piece will be stage managed and produced by the author—at his own expense—and will be quite the most elaborate thing in its line that has yet been brought to the attention of vaudeville supporters. There won't be very much in it in the way of profit for Mr. Gillette, but he will be satisfied if he adds another artistic success to his list.

Henry E. Dixey hopes to perfect arrangements, now in progress, by which he will present next summer a burlesque written by himself and in which he will act. The piece is in part a travesty on famous Shakespearean scenes and parts. The plan is to present it at the Garrick in Chicago next summer, doubtless by way of "trying out." If it goes well it will undoubtedly be taken elsewhere next season.

Frank C. Payne, the most industrious and effective publicity promoter in the theatrical world, has gone on tour ahead of Henry W. Savage's English production of Puccini's "Madam Butterfly."

James T. Powers says "the two great things responsible for the majority of trouble in this world are man's love of wet goods and woman's love of dry goods."

Eddie Foy, who is to appear at the Belasco next week in a return engagement of "The Earl and the Girl," which has served him well for two years, is to have a new play shortly. He is scheduled to appear in New York at the Majestic Theater at an early date in "The Orchid."

David Belasco is said to be at work on a new play for David Warfield, in which the noted character actor will probably open the new Stuyvesant Theater in New York next September.

Viola Allen has been playing "Cymbeline" in Boston. It is noted that William Jefferson Winter is out of the cast, Alexander Calvert playing the part of Posthumus. His impersonation must have been similar to Mr. Winter's since it is characterized by the Boston papers as "not fortunate." Howard Gould replaces J. H. Gilmour as Iachimo and appears to have made a good impression.

Clyde Fitch announces that his new play, "The Straight Road," is a story of real life. "Real life is much stranger than fiction," says Mr. Fitch, "and it is real life that I am endeavoring to set worth in this play. There is scarcely a family in New York that tragedy has not laid its compelling hand upon, and still the members of that family do not shriek to high heaven when the crisis occurs." Blanche Walsh will produce the play at the Astor Theater, January 7. She is to create a type of slum girl.

The chorus ladies at the New York Hippodrome are going in for higher education, by studying French during their leisure time. Miss Eugenie Omena, a French girl who leads the seaweed in the ballet of "Neptune's Daughter," has organized a class which meets every day from 12 to 1, in the large chorus dressing room at the Hippodrome. Already there are a round dozen in the class and several more are thinking of joining. Miss Omena's charge for tuition is 50 cents a week from each, and, as this places the French language within the price of all, she expects to do a rushing business.

Talk about the elevation of the stage. Well, I guess!

It is said that the Augustin Daly estate will seek to prevent the Shuberts from retaining the name of Daly's Theater when the playhouse passes under their control next May.

Augustus Thomas has expanded his Lambs Club skit, "A Constitutional and the Governor," with Jefferson De Angelis, has been temporarily transferred to the cast of "A Parisian Model," in which Anna Held is starring. The DeAngelis company is resting, awaiting a New York opening.

From metropolitan newspapers it appears that Ethel Levey, the wife of George Cohan, musical comedy star, is apparently not to "spend the winter in Florida," as she announced several weeks ago when she withdrew from her husband's company. She is preparing for a tour in vaudeville which will begin in four weeks. The expected has happened. Ethel is out for a divorce from "the candy kid."

Reports from New York last week say that Frances Ring was recently married to Thomas Meighan, of "The College Widow" company. Miss Ring was here the first week of the season at the New National Theater with "Man and His Angel," which went out of business shortly after leaving the Capital.

Louise Gunning will have the principal feminine role in "The Girl Behind the Counter," and it is darkly hinted that a comedian who is now playing in straight comedy will be cast for the chief male role. In other words, it looks as if Raymond Hitchcock may return to musical comedy before the season is half over. Louise Gunning is now the prima donna with "Veronique." Julian Mitchell will stage the new piece.

At last all doubt as to just what Mrs. Carter is really and truly going to do is about to be dispelled, for it has been announced that her season in "Cleo" will open January 31. Another surprise is the return to her support of Charles A. Stevenson, her old leading man. Both are exceedingly interesting announcements in view of late gossip concerning this very erratic and auburn-haired star.

You never would take Eddie Foy for a farmer, now would you? But far away in New Rochelle, N. Y., is a snug farm, with growing crops and chickens, cows, and piggies, where Foy spends his vacations. His wife and the seven kiddies stay there all the year round. Foy is in constant touch with the farm, and when Mrs. Foy reports that Willie or Susie has had a touch of the croup, or that she suspects Johnny has been smoking cigarettes behind the barn, or that the muley cow has gone back on her alfalfa or that worms the size of sea serpents are raising hob with the tomato patch—then there is black dread in the heart of Foy, and he finds it hard to be funny.

Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern will probably make their initial appearance at the Waldorf Theater, London, in "The Road to Yesterday." They have opened negotiations for the English rights to the play.

When Dwight Elmendorf begins his Lenten series of lectures at the New National Theater he will divide Norway into two lectures, one of them to be devoted to Norway proper and the other the title of "The Land of the Midnight Sun," or southern Norway. If the mail orders that are pouring into the New National Theater may be taken as a criterion it is evident that the Lenten series will be even more successful than the series just ended.

Arnold Daly has purchased the acting rights of Charles Frederick Nirdlinger's published play, "Washington's Defeat."

Miss Mae Marinan, a Washington girl, is a popular member of "The Earl and the Girl" company. Miss Marinan appeared here last season as Gladys, the lisping girl, in "The Liberty Belles," at the Belasco.

Four months of enthusiastic crowded houses at the Empire Theater, New York, demonstrated that John Drew has a genuine success in "His House In Order," now running on the road, headed this way. It is one of the biggest plays Pinero has ever written. Mr. Drew's polished, intellectual style and the power he brings to dramatic moments when necessary, find full employment in the role of the ex-diplomat who espoused the cause of a persecuted young wife. When he persuades this young wife, who is in a bitter conflict with the relatives of her husband's dead wife, to give up incriminating letters against the character of her predecessor, the great sacrifice is accomplished in a scene said to be of tremendous pathos and power. Margaret Illington, who plays the young wife, depicts her, it is declared, in all her varying emotional phases with a strong artistic appreciation of her qualities and in a manner that always carries the sympathy of the audience.

George Alexander has obtained the English rights to "D'Arcy of the Guards" for ultimate presentation at his London theater. Just when this will be is hard to say, as "His House In Order" continues to be a phenomenal success, and Alexander will follow it with a new play by Alfred Sutro.

There were over 100 members of the profession present at the New National Theater last Wednesday afternoon to witness the performance of "The Prince of India." Wednesday matinees at this playhouse are fast becoming "professional matinees," nearly every week attracting a large number of players in the city.

Adele Ritchie, who retired from the cast of "The Social Whirl" because it left New York for a road tour, is going into vaudeville. She will open her season next Monday night at Keith & Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theater, New York.

When Richard Carle, the star of "The Spring Chicken," travels around the country, he invariably has a piano moved into his room. In this way he hits on many a good tune. The infectious air of "Peculiar Julia" struck him one time in a one-night stand, and "Peculiar Julia" brought him several thousand dollars in royalties. He always tries to figure out new tunes even without any definite idea of their eventual location. When the time comes for him to write or stage a new show, and a certain situation presents itself, he goes to his trunk and sees if he has anything to fit it. Last winter he bought a melody from a Cleveland composer named Lusk. In the summer he put words to it, and "Waiting for a Certain Girl," sung by Victor Morley, has proved to be one of the principal song hits of "The Spring Chicken."

The Belasco Theater has agreed to make the Public Education Association party to its profits next week, for every performance of "The Earl and the Girl," except that of New Year night. On all tickets sold through the association, or to a purchaser presenting its card, it is to be allowed a certain percentage. Cards are to be had from the Public Education Association, room 18, 201 Second street northeast. The association has fought and helped to win battles for higher pay for teachers, the establishment of a juvenile court, and the supervision of employment agencies. They have done a lot of good work in the District, are now fighting the child labor battle, and deserve all possible support.

Robert T. Haines and Frank Worthing, two of the best actors of which our native stage boasts, are this season associated with Grace George in the Hopgood-Pollock play, "Clothes," in which she will soon appear at the New National Theater.

Aubrey Boucicault and Ruth Holt, an actress of some prominence, were married recently. Boucicault will to-morrow night appear in support of C. B. Jefferson in "Playing the Game." It had been the actor's intention to go into vaudeville, but he changed his mind when the Jefferson contract was offered him.

The many friends of Mrs. James Brown Potter hear with pleasure that she is on the high road to success again, and unless there is some untoward happening soon, will have all her financial troubles behind her. Mrs. Potter is at present giving one week's performance at each one of the many suburban theaters around London, and with "Charlotte Corday" she has already made enough money to set up a modest little home. "I mean to build up my fortune again," she tells all her friends, and it begins to look as if she would succeed.

WARFIELD'S DOG ACTOR PROVES TOO ARTISTIC

Few people will be ready to concede that quadrupeds have a defined sense of emotion, which is generally regarded as an evidence of the superiority of mankind over the animal kingdom. There is one man, however, who has serious doubts on the subject, and that man is David Warfield, the Herr von Barwig of "The Music Master."

Ever since the first night of the play, an intelligent little terrier has been a part of the cast, making his appearance twice during the performance in the arms of Mary Bates, who impersonates the kind old Houston street landlady. In the last act he is carried on as von Barwig bids farewell to his landlady and his long-time associates, preparatory to boarding ship for his former home in Germany. In this scene the old music master shakes hands all round, and sympathetically pats the little dog on the head and says goodby to him, along with the rest of his friends. Everybody weeps at this juncture, and the scene is one of the most touching in the play.

A few nights ago a member of Mr. Belasco's executive staff was in Philadelphia, and noticed that the little animal was not brought on in the closing scene. After the performance he asked Warfield why the dog was omitted.

"That dog," said Warfield, solemnly, "has developed such a realistic sense of phatos that it was impossible to act with him. I've heard that Mr. Belasco once trained a cat to be a realistic part of the performance of 'Shore Acres,' but I didn't know that he had been secretly developing the higher expression of feeling in our pet dog."

"I don't understand," said the New Yorker.

"Well," said Warfield, "the facts are these: Every night when I said farewell and patted his head, the dog shared in the general feeling of regret at my departure, and when the rest of us began to shed tears and sob, the animal would set up the most dismal and lugubrious howls you ever heard. Nothing that I or Mrs. Bates could reasonably do would moderate his grief, so that, failing to pacify his turbulent emotions, we were obliged to leave him behind the scenes. I honestly believe that dog understood every word we said and tried to act his part like the rest of us. It was all right, except that he overtaxed it, and had not learned the importance of repression, of artistic self-control. Ah," added the actor, "he is an intelligent little animal, but until he stops being too weepy he will never be a first-class emotional dog-star."

Stage Gossip From The Great White Way

NEW YORK, Dec. 29.—The season is getting its "second wind," as it usually does after Christmas. The successes of the fall give way to what it is fondly hoped will be the successes of the winter. John Drew and "His House in Order" have left the Empire to make way for the return of Maude Adams and "Peter Pan." "Madame Butterfly" has fluttered away from the Garden and "The Student King" has erected his throne there. Henri De Vries, in "The Double Life," has replaced May Irwin's "Mrs. Wilson" at the Bijou; Weber's "Dream City" has reopened Weber Music Hall, which has been dark for ten days during the rehearsals of the new piece, and "Brown of Harvard," in the person of Harry Woodruff, has come back to the Majestic.

The two returning wanderers—"Peter Pan" and "Brown of Harvard"—were naturally assured of a warm welcome. Each of the three novelties made good, though perhaps the one that came nearest to disappointing expectations was Rhinehart Roberts' "The Double Life," presented by Henri De Vries, which may have been the fault of the expectations. The clever Dutch actor created such a furor with Heyermann's "A Case of Arson" that the public expected something equally as good. But unfortunately "The Double Life" is by a new recruit to the ranks of the dramatists, while "A Case of Arson" was by a master realist.

"The Double Life" tells the story of a young man of birth and fortune who loses his memory as the result of an accident and lives twenty years as a common miner, when a sudden shock restores him to the personality of his lost youth. In his two personalities the hero has been first a mine owner and then a common miner in his own mine, and the restoration of his completed consciousness brings a happy outcome to a bitter strike, and matrimony to a capitalist's son who is in love with the miner's daughter.

Good acting does much to conceal awkward construction and lack of plausibility in the play. The idea is a good one and treated with skill might have proven abundantly fruitful. But everywhere it shows that it is the work of an amateur. It is told simply and directly, but there are spots where it is bare to the verge of crudity.

But the piece certainly fulfills one of its main purposes in furnishing a rare artistic opportunity to Mr. de Vries, who again proved himself a thoroughly good actor. His impersonation of Frank Van Buren, who becomes Joe Hartmann, the mine boss, and then is restored to himself again, was admirable, eloquent, subtle, and true. Face, attitude, movement, gesture, speech were all in harmony first with the one character, then with the other. In the supporting company several players do much for the play. Miss Truax is admirable as the wife, and in an exposition of conflicting emotions, hope, doubt, and fear, in the moment of Hartmann's perplexity